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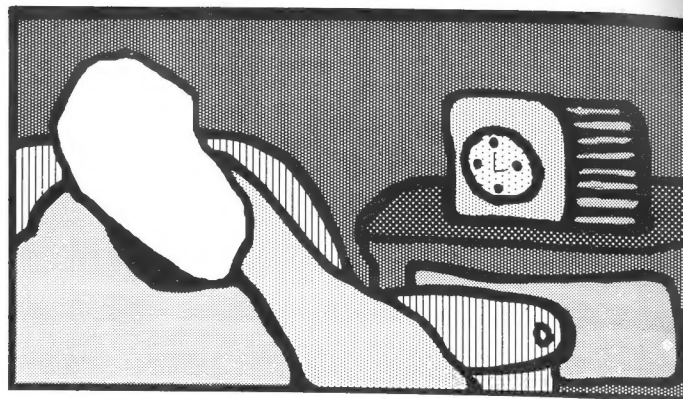
FEATURE INTERVIEWS WITH
FOUR FEMALE ARTISTS:



TRINA ROBBINS
KRYSTINE KRYTTRE
GEORGANNE DEEN
REBECKA WRIGHT

© 1987
DORI
SEDA

(Kär-tön') new comic arts journal



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Trina Robbins, Krystine Kryttre,
Georganne Deen, Rebecka Wright
Conducted and Written by: **Tynan Northrop**

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(kär-tön') new comic arts journal,
Volume 1, Number 3
© 1988 by **MANCLOCK PUBLISHING & GRAPHIX**

This issue is dedicated to:

DORI SEDA

(1951-1988)

Titles in which Dori Seda's work appears: (in alphabetical order) *Cannibal Romance*, *Lonely Nights* (solo), *Prime Cuts* #1, (#2 reprinted from *Yellow Silk* #17), *Rip Off Comix* #14, 16, 17, *Sexy Stories from the World's Religions*, *San Francisco Comic Book* #7, *Tits and Clits* #7, *Viper*, *Weirdo* #2, 4, 7, 8, 9, 18, 20, (#22 Seda's last comic), *Wimmen's Comix* #8, (#9 back cover), 10, 11, 12, and *Yellow Silk* #17.

Dori Seda's artwork is available through: **APEX NOVELTIES**, P.O. Box 3199, Berkeley, CA 94703, **LAST GASP**, 2180 Bryant, San Francisco, CA 94100, and **RIP OFF PRESS**, P.O. Box 4686, Auburn, CA 95604. A retrospective of Seda's work will be released in December 1988, published by **LAST GASP**.

Yuckaroonies

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TONA-TOONS PRESENTS:

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The Adventures of Mr. Garbage-Eater!

THERE IS ONE FACT ABOUT DOGS THAT MOST DOG OWNERS ARE RELUCTANT TO TALK ABOUT TO THOSE WHO ARE FORTUNATELY DOG-LESS.



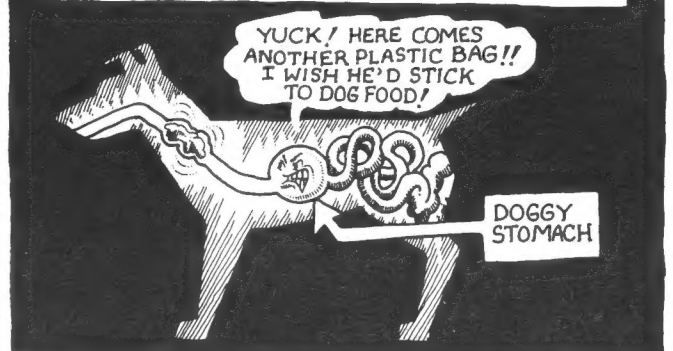
AND THAT IS THIS: NO MATTER HOW WELL YOU FEED YOUR DOG, THE MOST DELICIOUS DELICACY HE CAN IMAGINE IS GARBAGE LAYING AROUND ON THE SIDEWALK.



AND... IF YOUR DOG FINDS A HALF-EATEN SANDWICH INSIDE A PLASTIC BAG, HE WILL EAT THE WHOLE THING, PLASTIC BAG AND ALL.



WHEN GOD INVENTED THE DOG, HE HAD NOT YET INVENTED THE PLASTIC BAG. THEREFORE, THE DOG'S DIGESTIVE SYSTEM IS NOT DESIGNED FOR SUCH THINGS.



WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO END UP WITH, IS A DOG WITH A PLASTIC BAG HANGING HALFWAY OUT OF HIS ASS, AND YOU HAVE TO PULL IT OUT BECAUSE IT'S STUCK THERE.



HEY, MON... WHY IS THAT CHICK PUKING ALL OVER THE SIDEWALK?

I JUST SAW HER PULLING A PLASTIC BAG OUT OF HER DOG'S ASSHOLE, MON... MAYBE THAT'S WHY.



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- ☐ **Alison Bechdel**
Dykes to Watch Out For (weekly), Gay Comix, Strip AIDS USA, Wimmen's Comix
- ☐ **Angela Bocage**
Gay Comix, Renegade Romance, Strip AIDS USA, Wimmen's Comix
- ☐ **Colleen Doran**
A Distant Soil, Fortune's Friends, Strip AIDS USA
- ☐ **Cynthia Martin**
Renegade Romance, Spiderman, Star Wars, Wimmen's Comix
- ☐ **Carol Tyler**
Strip AIDS USA, Weirdo, Wimmen's Comix
- ☐ Other (next year's nominees!) _____

Balloting is open to all comics industry professionals (writers, artists, editors, whathaveyou). Please look for a ballot in your pro packet at the San Diego Comics Convention. If you will not be attending the convention, please send your vote to:

Tona Award
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by July 27. To assure that your ballot is counted, please write your name and/or credits on the envelope.

This award is sponsored by Last Gasp Press and the Wimmen's Comix Collective.

*New in this case means within the last 5 years.

Facsimile Accepted.

Trina Robbins, prominent Bay Area cartoonist, writer, editor, feminist, and mother, cannot remember a time when she wasn't drawing. Raised in New York by "very supportive" parents, Robbins was reading by age four and an avid comics fan by age eleven: "I was reading anything I could get my little hands on...I was the school weird kid." But at thirteen, tragedy struck as Robbins' schoolteacher mother talked Robbins into giving away what are now thousands of dollars worth of comics because, she said, "This is kid stuff."

Fortunately, the loss of her childhood comics did not stop Robbins in her quest to become an artist. At eighteen, Robbins moved to the Village (Greenwich, that is) to further explore the art world.

Her first perception of a "true artist" was much derived from the comics: "I saw him as this crazy little guy with a beret, a smock, and a Van Dyke beard who lives in a garret in Paris—you know what I mean?" (Robbins reaches over to my notebook, grabs my pen, and proceeds to draw) "These bohemian artists would always draw something that look like this..." (a profile, stylized eye, and one strategically placed tear) "and the artist would say, 'I call this *Man's Injustice to Man*.'"

From the beginning, Robbins knew she was going to be an artist: "Of course, I couldn't grow the Van Dyke beard, but I looked good in berets. I even took French in high school so I could go to Paris."

Before she made it to Paris, the next stop was art school (Cooper Union) where

Robbins discovered that "they teach you whatever is fashionable. At the time [it] was huge, wall-sized abstracts." Meanwhile, Robbins was busy drawing little pictures—almost too busy—and after being thrown out of art school for "losing interest", Robbins began to doubt her potential as an artist: "I felt like they were saying, 'Thou art not an artist. Go hence!'" As a result, Robbins began to hang out with "arty guys" who drew, rather than draw and publish work herself.

Living in L.A. in 1965, married to a "bad poet and marijuana dealer", Robbins witnessed the beginning of the "Silver Age" in comics, and her love for cartoon art was revitalized. *Fantastic Four*, *Thor*, and *Spiderman* inspired her renewal: "All of us hippies were reading it. We thought it was really neat." It was at this time that Robbins realized that she was drawing "proto-comics".

After leaving her husband and returning to New York, Robbins opened a boutique in the Lower East Side, selling bizarre clothing that she self-designed: "[My husband] was selling marijuana to the rock stars, and I was making clothes for them." During this time, a friend showed her copies of *The East Village Other (EVO)*, an underground New York paper, with comics in them. It was in these papers that Robbins first encountered *Captain High*, and *Gentle's Trip Out*. "The first comic to inspire me [in *EVO*] was done by a woman, and I didn't know it." This style of cartoon art was too new to be called "underground", thus Robbins called them "hip comics" and

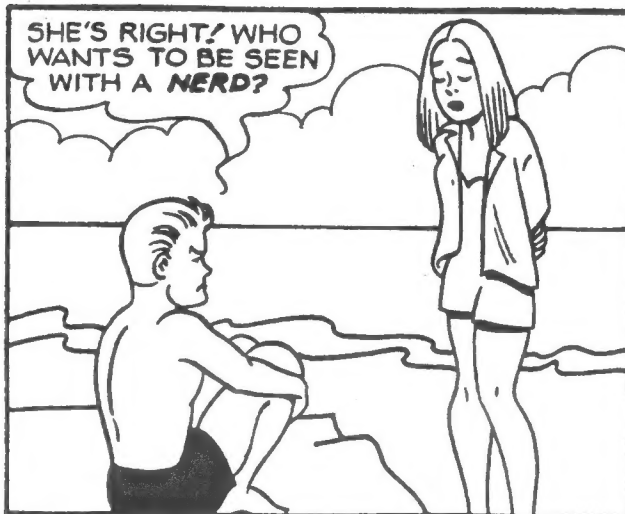
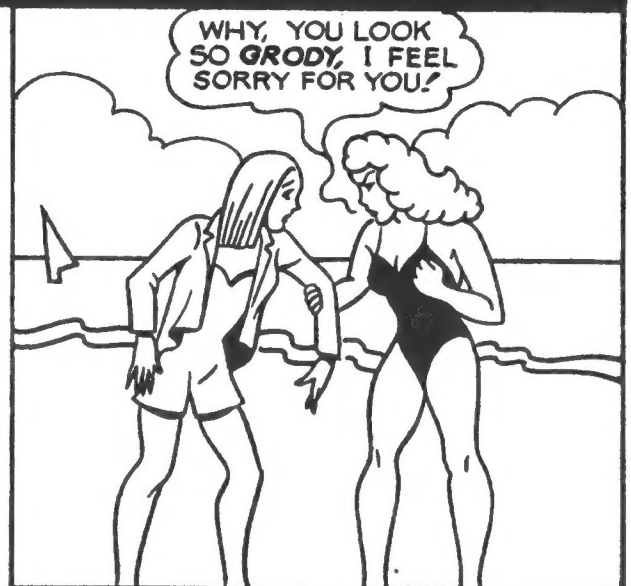
began publishing her first "psychedelic, decorative" artwork as advertisements for her boutique: "I was sponsoring the comics."

Since her L.A. days, Robbins has consistently been drawing and publishing her cartoon art (which is no longer "bohemian") in numerous comic books as well as published and edited her own work. Robbins' latest project, co-editing an AIDS benefit paperback titled *STRIP AIDS U.S.A.* (136 pp.), has just been published by Last Gasp in San Francisco. Robbins began working on *STRIP AIDS* with co-editors Robert Triptow and Bill Sienkiewicz last October, after she saw the British *STRIP AIDS* at a convention in England: "That's when I knew that we had to do one." Robbins admits that in the selection of contributing artists for *STRIP AIDS U.S.A.*, "There are more women in it than if anyone else had done it." Robbins plans to return to England in late autumn to hold joint panels and exhibitions of the artwork with the contributors of the British *STRIP AIDS*.

In May, Robbins offered the exhibition of artwork from *STRIP AIDS U.S.A.* to the San Francisco Cartoon Museum. The show was rejected, basically on the grounds of being too limited, too controversial, and "not good for their reputation". Robbins complains, "I could understand if this was in Dubuque, but this is San Francisco."

More recently, Robbins made a proposal to the San Diego Comic Convention Committee to establish a "Dori Seda Memorial Award" (in conjunction with the Women's Comics Collective) to be awarded to the most promising female cartoonist in the field

I WAS A 98^{lb} NERD



YOU CAN BE A NEW WOMAN, TOO!

This piece was originally intended as a tote bag design for Trocadero.

within in the last five years. Unfortunately, the proposal was turned down by the Committee, who claimed that such an award would give women "special" attention, and that it would compete with the already established Russ Manning Award (which only includes artists that have come up in the last two years). Robbins had hoped the "Dori Seda Memorial Award" would encourage new women to enter the world of comics and push for equal representation as well as broaden the area of the Russ Manning Award, which, according to Robbins, primarily supports the "accepted male superhero artform".

Robbins is currently working on a revised edition of the book *WOMEN AND THE COMICS*, co-edited by Catherine Yronwode, which will include many newly discovered artists. She says of the women cartoonists she worked with, "Every one of them are fantastic women."

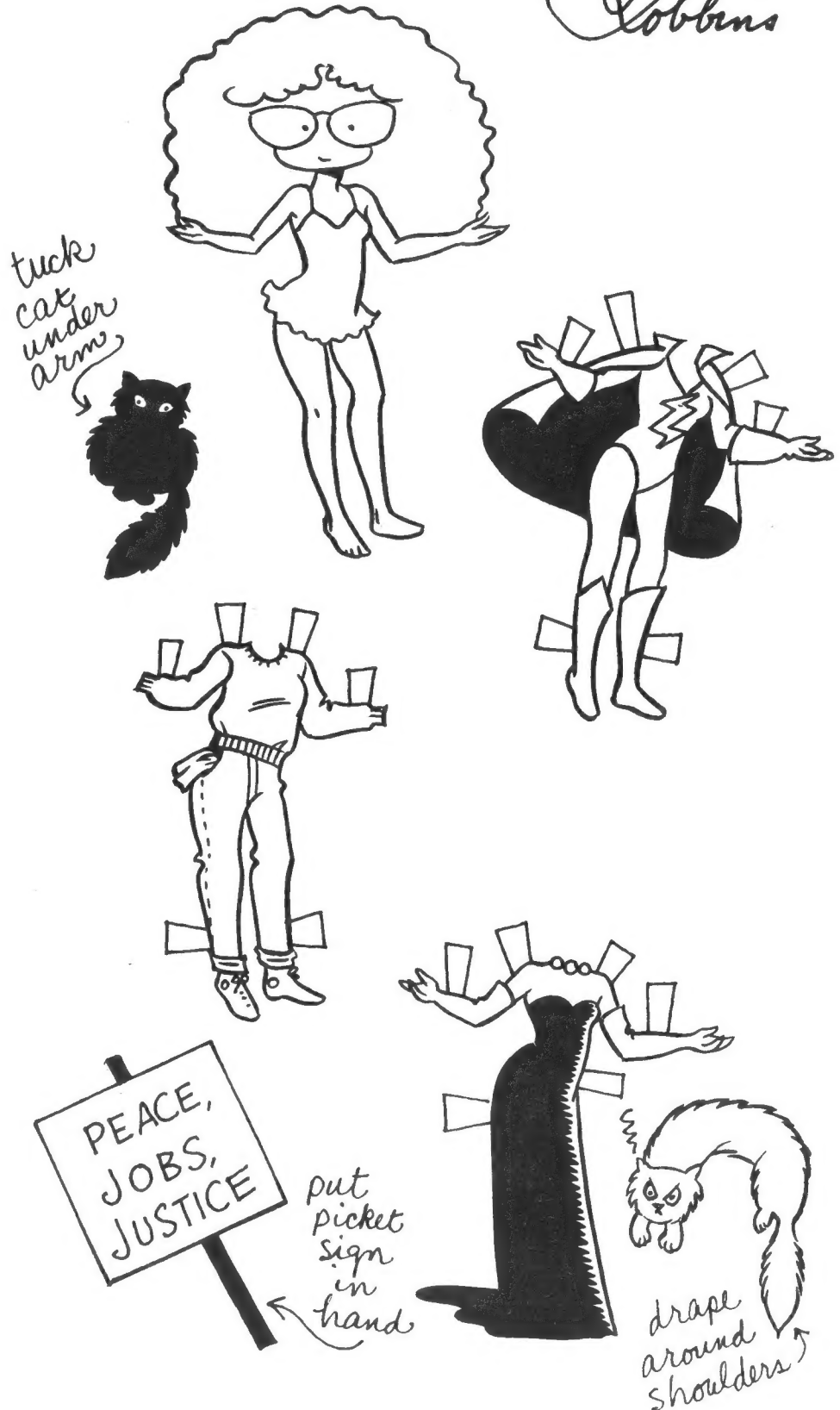
When asked if she is concerned with being considered a token woman cartoonist in panel discussions, exhibitions, and collective books, Robbins responds with a strong defense: "I'd rather there be token representation than no representation...I hope I am a good cartoonist, but I will always be a woman cartoonist—you can't separate them. Perhaps in some Utopian future, where there's no difference between women and men, blacks and whites, it will be possible to separate them, but there's too much inequality now."

As for today's world of comic art, Robbins feels "there's almost no underground anymore. I don't think [it] is what it used to be", however, she senses a strength in the independently published comics: "We're all in this together." Robbins also hopes that some day the superhero will be obsolete, but she claims, "There's a neverending supply of twelve year old boys."

In her constant at-

tempts to pave the way for up and coming women cartoonists, Robbins has definitely been a pioneer in the world of comic art. ●

Iriga Robbins



self-portrait

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KRYSTINE KRYTTRE

San Francisco native Krystine Kryttre moved to the suburbs with her family when she was young, to a world of "nothing more than MTV, coke, and CD players." That unfulfilling lifestyle caused Kryttre to return (on her own) to San Francisco, where she is now a rising star in the underground comic arts scene: "I really belonged here all along."

Kryttre's interest in comics emerged when she was a mere ten years old, secretly reading issues of *Air Pirates* that belonged to her friend's older brother. Later, in high school, Kryttre encountered such underground classics as *Zap* and *Freak Brothers*, and admired the European style of *Heavy Metal*.

Being a child in the sixties, Kryttre feels she missed out on the birth of the true underground scene: "It was important for me historically to read these comics. If you're a kid in the sixties, you get cool toys—if you're a big person, you get cool drugs." But Kryttre knew there was something out there for her: "I always wanted to be an underground artist. I'm not exactly sure why, but at least it seemed romantic."

Initially drawing "funny pictures that didn't mean anything", Kryttre realized that working with deadlines motivated her, as she began drawing cartoon illustrations for a local punk magazine. While dropping off a stack of magazines at Last Gasp in San Francisco, she met Eric Gilbert, who then introduced her to the Loonies Club, a group of Bay Area comics people. It was through Loonies that Kryttre met people like Trina Robbins, Lee Binswanger, and

close friend Dori Seda.

From that point on, Kryttre was quickly climbing the ladder to success, as her work was being published in such titles as: *Viper*, *Weirdo*, *Wimmen's* (she co-edited #10 with Seda), and *Carnibal Romance*. "Dori [Seda] nurtured me a lot. And Eric [Gilbert] encouraged me. If you're encouraged, and start getting published, it's the best way to learn."

Kryttre's love of the Bay Area underground in directly related to the artists themselves: "In the underground, each artist—male or female—is an incredible, amazing [individual], and they have their own tastes, and their own attitudes, and their own styles. That's what makes it so interesting and attractive. We all draw differently, and most of us don't make a lot of money at it." She adds modestly, "I'm still amazed that people like my stuff. I'm real critical of my own work."

Although Kryttre feels it's essential to work on her art every day, she does not aspire to be a commercial artist. "I want my passion separate from my money." Thus, Kryttre works with neon signs during the day at a store in San Francisco.

When asked about her family's reaction to her increasingly popularity as a cartoon artist, Kryttre claims: "They are spectacularly indifferent. They're glad I'm not in trouble, dead, or in jail. My dad is dead and my mom really doesn't know what it's like to have artists in the family. My sister's fascinated by me—she's the complete opposite of me. She's good, I'm evil."

Kryttre's favorite and most characteristic medium is scratchboard: "I'm hooked on it.



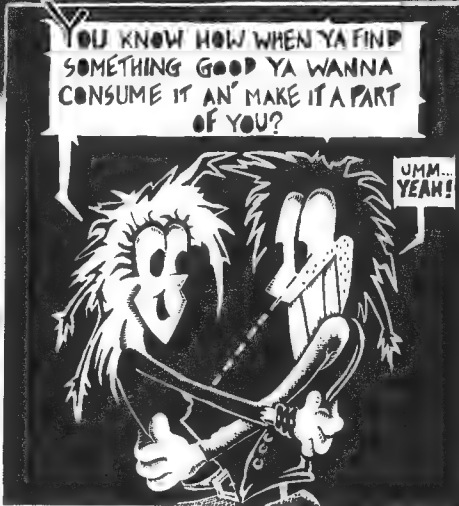
self-portrait

I like the way things look, but it takes forever." As for common themes, Kryttre feels that sex and death are her domain. "There's a delicate balance between sex and death, like passion and detachment, order and chaos. Not everyone wants to handle this subject matter." Kryttre also incorporates symbolism in much of her artwork: "If something doesn't need to be there, it's not there."

Kryttre's latest work can be seen on the cover of the final *Centrifugal Bumblepuppy*, the cover of *Wimmen's Comix* #13 (the Occult issue), *Weirdo* #22 (a moving piece about her friendship with Seda), *STRIP AIDS U.S.A.*, and the next issue of *RAW*, which will be released in a smaller format later this year. When asked about appearing in *RAW*, Kryttre replied, "I was shocked at first, but I think I can handle it." What will her piece be about? "It's about suicide."

As for current projects, Kryttre is planning on doing an album cover for the local band Weenie Roast. She has experimented with animation in the past, loves illustration, and hopes to get into painting in the future. Kryttre would also like to learn to play bass guitar: "Everyone tells me I look like a bass player."

What's next for Krystine Kryttre? At the moment, she says: "I just want a vacation." ●







GEORGANNE DEEN

Just mention the album cover for Oingo Boingo's 1983 album *Nothing to Fear*, or the comic book *Cannibal Romance*, and a striking, colorful image comes to mind. Such brilliant artwork is the product of Georganne Deen, a Texas-born artist whose work has been seen (but maybe not acknowledged) nationwide, as well as internationally.

As her artwork ranges from one medium to another, Deen claims: "Communicating is my first love—communicating the idea. I don't care if it's written in a sentence, or if it's a drawing, or if it's a sculpture, or what. The idea is more important to me than its manifestation." Although communicating is clearly her primary motivation for creating, Deen adds keenly, "Well, sometimes my walls are blank and I need something to put on them."

Georganne Deen admires the work of many different artists, ranging from the great Spanish painters, such as Dali and Picasso, to New York contemporary, Julian Schnabel. In the cartoon arena, Deen enjoys the work of many of the artists she has shown with, such as Mark Mothersbaugh and Robert Williams: "They really amaze me." Deen's pal Gary Panter has also been a major influence and inspiration—he was the first person to encourage Deen to take her artwork seriously.

While Panter was attending East Texas State University, he encouraged Deen to join him, which she did. After a few semesters, however, Panter and Deen's other friends graduated, so she "just left when they did."

When asked if she considers herself a commercial artist, Deen claims she has supported herself since the mid-1970's. "I'm not a mainstream illustrator. I don't get a lot of work because I don't take art direction very well. [Some] artists think [making commercial art] is a degrading thing to do, but quite frankly, I'm proud of it. I know that a lot of people would never ever have seen my work if they hadn't seen it on certain album covers." Deen's album covers have included work for: J. Geils Band's *Freeze Frame* album ("The Mr. Potatohead psychiatrist is one of my favorites"), Oingo Boingo, and Phil Alvin.

Since 1980, the year Deen moved to California (after five years in New York), her work has been exhibited primarily with work of male artists. Deen feels there are fewer women than men that overlap the issues she deals with: "There are specifics in the way I represent information. I think the only woman I've come across that gets even close [to the way I represent information] is Carol Lay, who doesn't paint as much as she does cartoons."

How does she feel about the absence of women addressing stronger issues? "It kind of pisses me off that more women artists aren't more direct with their feelings or their thoughts. Why aren't they bothering to translate their considerable insight and depth of feeling into a visual language that can be understood by the rest of the world? I'm impatient to see women's visual vocabularies catch up with their verbal ones, and to see them shed those old exoskeletons which are so passé

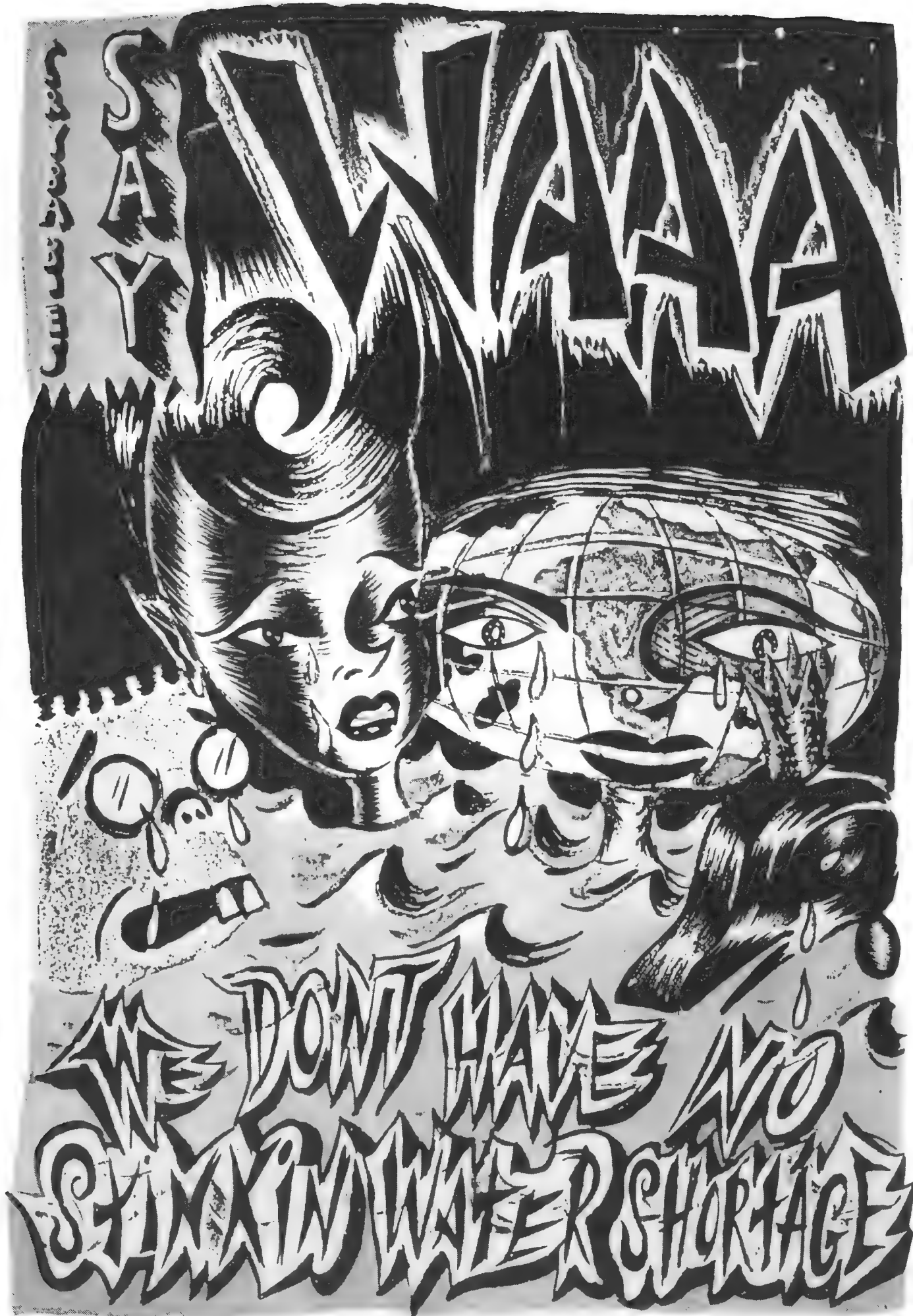
and boring."

Deen's first book, *HYPOGLYCEMIC CATS*, was published in 1983, and she hopes to have another book published soon.

In 1986, Deen completed one of her most famous, large-scale sculptures, *S.S. Vivisector*, for the awareness group People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. Originally, Deen had planned to design a t-shirt or bumpersticker, but she was encouraged by a patron to create something "more spectacular" to draw the public to the issues of animal rights. Deen and Dallas friend Greg Metz succeeded in creating a mass of welded steel (eighteen feet long), covered with caricatures of maniacal doctors and tortured animals: "[Metz] is an outrageous sculptor whose work is highly complementary to mine. He gave the [S.S. Vivisector] the body, I gave it the soul."

Deen is currently working on a piece for Carol Lay's comic book *GOOD GIRLS*, as well as a computer project with Timothy Leary, which she's been involved in for the last eight months: "It's not like it really has a beginning or an end—it's an ongoing thing."

In July, Deen's solo show opens at LA LUZ DE JESUS in Los Angeles. She says this show contains more personal, self-reflecting work, unlike previous work, which addresses exterior issues: "[My work] has always been very angry and also extremely violent at times. Now, the stuff is kind of sad. Sometimes I get angry at things because they depress me, and it's always been easier for me to get angry and attack." As for the process of painting, Deen



claims she never knows exactly how the painting are going to turn out. "It goes whichever way it has to go."

Deen says of her introspective work: "This takes more nerve than any of the work I've done thus far. I feel so vulnerable. I wish other women would do what I'm doing so I wouldn't feel like I'm alone. I wish I had a role model—somebody I could 'hero worship' so to speak, but I don't have one, so it's really pretty tough."

Georganne Deen has become that role model for many aspiring women artists to come. ●



self-portrait



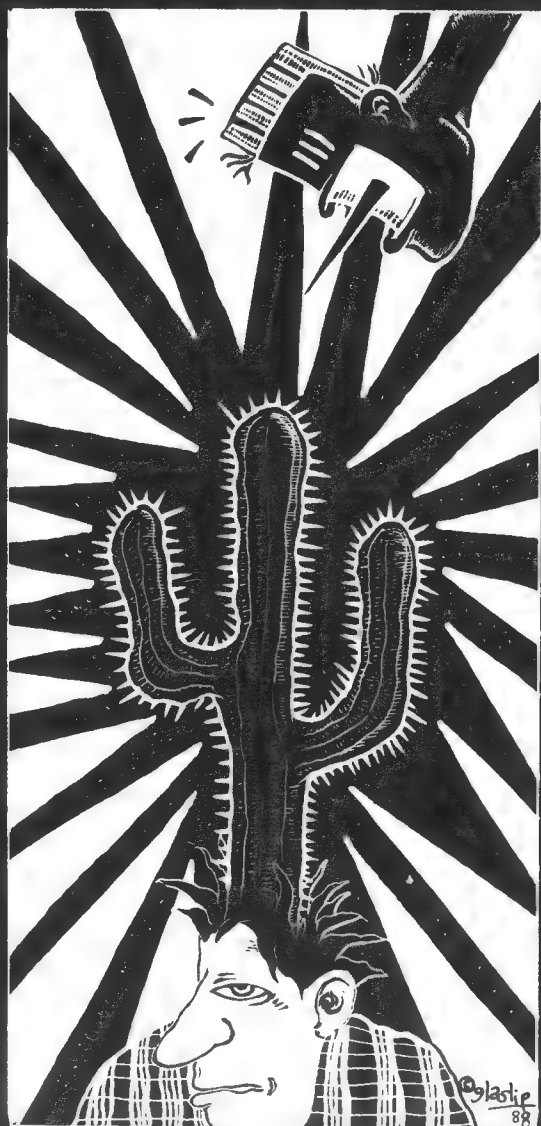
V!DA LOCA

!!ART WEAR!!

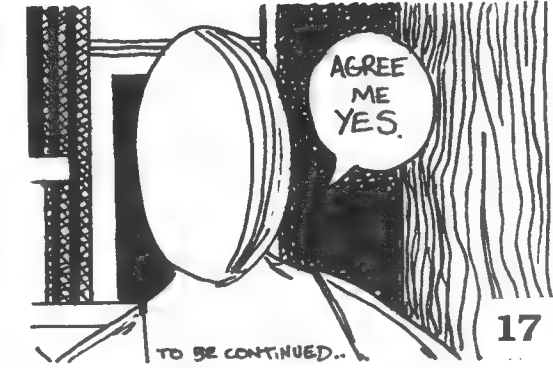
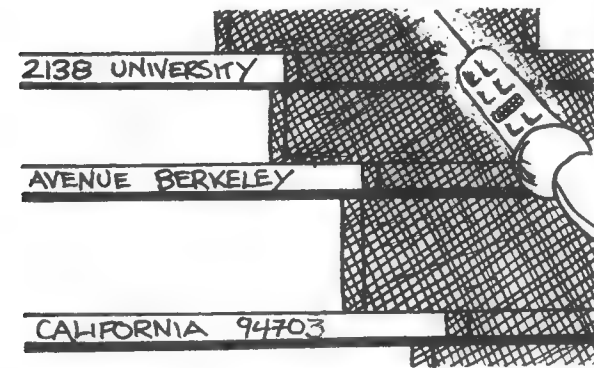
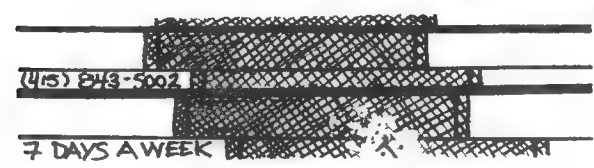
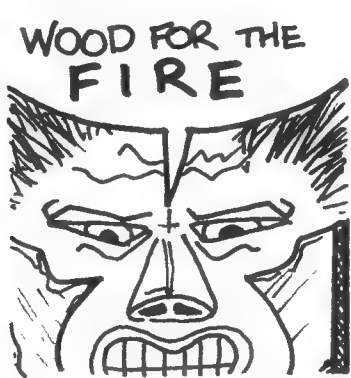
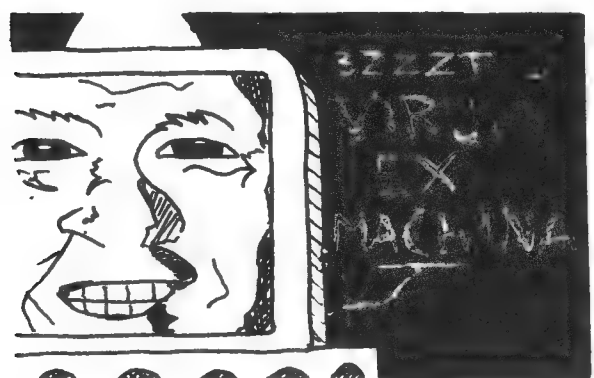
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HELL'S 'TOONIST'S



Rebecca Wright

As a child, Rebecca Wright "couldn't get enough" of comics, but it wasn't until 1970, when Wright came to California (from her native land of Oregon) that she truly became "hooked". Wright says jokingly, "My career as a roller derby queen wasn't panning out, so I spent more time reading funny books."

In college, Wright majored in American Studies (a combination of "history, politics, literature, art history, and whatever"). Specializing in twentieth century popular American culture, Wright was encouraged by her mother to write her thesis on Lois Lane, since her closet was full of her childhood comic books: "And so I did. I wrote my thesis on Lois Lane and her relationship with Superman."

Wright is inspired by writers such as Zora Neale Hurston and social commentator/screenwriter Anita Loos, who wrote from the 1920's until the 1960's: "Her piece on Andy Warhol's followers is pretty great." Thus Wright began her writing career as a critic, but soon realized that, for her, it was "not honest". Wright decided: "I don't want to sit here writing about other people's comics. I want to write my own. This is crazy." Wright's first project emerged with Angela Bocage: "It just worked out that we were both serious about pursuing it at the same time." After attending two comics conventions, and receiving offers from

Krystine Kryttre and Dori Seda, "It started the whole thing rolling."

Wright says of her process: "I draw everything out in thumbnails and I do my own minimal layouts, then I make lots of suggestions to the artists, and they're free to use that or not as they see fit."

Wright's work can be seen in *Wimmen's* #11 (with Angela Bocage, *Wimmen's* #12 (with Blanche Santa Ana, co-edited by Wright and Bocage: reprinted in *Bitch Magazine* #20), *Renegade Romance* (with Mario Hernandez), and *California Girls* #8 (co-written by Hernandez). Wright has just completed a piece for the upcoming *Wimmen's* #13 (the Occult issue) with Barb Rusch ("She's the next big thing!"). Wright is also planning a monthly strip for *Bitch Magazine*, which she will draw, "about an all-girl band".

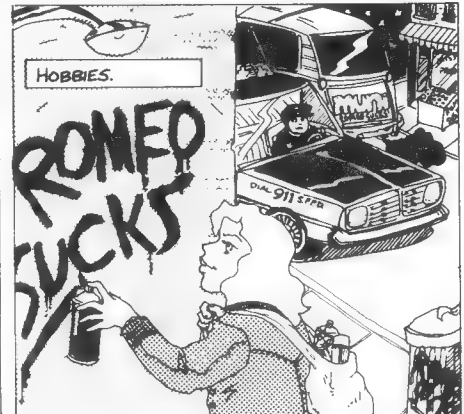
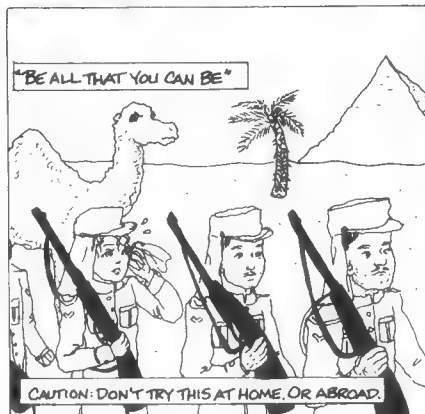
When composing stories, Wright claims "The idea is the most important thing. Generally, I come up with an idea, write around that, and add characters as needed." Wright rarely writes for already established characters, except in the case of *California Girls*: "Mario [Hernandez] had dreamed about the characters—he had this idea about a dress made of glass [which was] perfect for the *California Girls* characters...Using one set of characters works well for some people, like Jaime

[Hernandez], for instance, and Gilbert [Hernandez] in *Love and Rockets*. I think they do the best job of it. They can tell any story they want to with their characters."

When it comes to the world of superhero comics, Wright believes: "There's definitely a place for heroes, they don't have to be super." Citing characters by Jaime Hernandez ("Comrade Seven, Go-Go Girl, Atoma") and Alan Moore's *Pictopia* (a collaboration with Donald Sims in *ANYTHING GOES*), Wright feels the stories are effective and "as good as anything else I've read. Both use superheroes whimsically or satirically, however, not heroically. The only problem with superheroes, these days, is that they are all-powerful in the market. There's got to be room for other stuff." Wright adds comically, "When I was little, I always liked girl characters better than boy superheroes, but I didn't like Wonder Woman because she had too many gadgets—too many gimmicks."

As for being female in the male-dominated world of comics, Wright believes that "equal opportunity" is not enough: "In the 1960's, during the civil rights movement, the Supreme Court ruled that people who have been oppressed need an extra push. To a certain degree, it doesn't matter, but I don't think it hurts to have *Wimmen's Comix*, a "Women

THERE ARE MANY CURES FOR HEARTBREAK.





in Comics" panel at a convention, or a women's issue of (*kâr-tôn*), or *Amazing Heroes*, or anything else."

In addition to writing for comics ("I'm not getting nearly as much done as I want to"), Wright is also the drummer for the new San Francisco band Weenie Roast, whose first EP was released in May: "[Weenie Roast] is all female, and pretty much all of the coverage we get is [because we are an] all female band. I don't think we'd be as intriguing to people, at first, if it wasn't for the angle...this bizarre angle."

Although writing is Wright's first love, she doubts she will be able to devote most of her time to comics because: "In most cases, you're not able to make a living at it...and, sorry to say, especially if you're a woman. There's a flyer circulating around right now about the problems you won't have to deal with if

you're a woman artist: One is success, another is people calling you a genius...Yet another is losing sight of your perspective (because you'll be working three jobs)—that kind of thing." In addition to her writing, and working with Weenie Roast, Wright also works full time as a typographer.

When asked if her family supports her artistic endeavors, Wright quotes her father (who is an artist himself): "In one letter he wrote [talking about the band], he said, 'Sometimes I get the feeling that you're just a bunch of nice, middle-class kids trying to be BAD BAD BAD.' Well, you know, you could say that about any white artist—you really could. What, if you're not Shirley Temple, that means you're 'BAD BAD BAD'? I don't know."

Whatever Rebecka Wright is up to next, it's definitely going to be good, good, good. ●

JUST-A-



REBORNN!

portrait by Mario Hernandez

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Image of a 'Fuzzy Wuzzy' lunchbox with 'CIRCUS I grow fur' and 'fuzzy Wuzzy BATH SOAP' text.

BOCAGE ON BOCAGE

I appreciate the opportunity to do a self-interview here, partly because as a reader/viewer, I often wonder about the artist's relationship to the work, and thus this may help people involve themselves with mine; and partly because it shows me where I am as well....

Q: Where are you?

A: In the living room of my San Francisco apartment, writing this at a quarter to two on a weeknight in the midst of a lot of housework that was long overdue, because I'm a new mother and can do other things late because my ten-week-old sleeps through the night. The boy makes me feel much younger, not older, in a world-conquering way; though the brat in me says "Parents are Grown-up," she also used to think people over 21 were grown-up, and her opinion on the subject of maturity is irrelevant. Since the baby's been here, I've had a mystical, as opposed to a conversion, experience: ecstasies, love, new faith (as opposed to new beliefs), pride—industrial strength. Other emotions, industrial strength as well, and an overwhelmingly powerful sense of commitment to the industry of nurturing human survival: before, I could get depressed and play with suicide, get angry and play with murder, fall in lust and play with pleasant but irresponsible boys, but now it's *Girl*, you ain't playing anymore, not with fucking up your life. I quit smoking, for instance...though there are minor lapses.

Q: What books are you reading right now?

A: Besides *The First Three Years of Life*, which is real compassionate and positive about babies, *Missile Envy* by Helen Caldicott and *Get the Message* by Lucy Lippard. Actually, *Missile Envy* talks, among other things, about the zappo commitment motherhood seems to bring even to crazy young women like myself, and in dealing with the threat of nuclear death, it has to do with both art and biological survival. Lippard's book I also like a lot, because it takes comics perfectly seriously. I'd recommend it to anyone (reader/viewer or artist) who does likewise. Lippard's an art historian, i.e., from the gallery/museum art world, not the comics art world (and isn't it fucked that that seems to be ignored terrain for much of the comics community and thus the distinction has to be made?), and finds herself actually choosing comics as her own medium at times. Part of the value of this book, too, is in the asking of certain questions. People often seem to be satisfied with the kneejerk answers to, like, what is comics, can art and politics work together and should they, how does an image communicate differently from words?

Q: What artists have been important to your work?

A: So many that I'll have to split the question. First, in the art world, Margaret Rinkovsky and David Izu, who were my teachers at UC, both let me know I really had strengths at a time I thought it was just I was odd, and prepared me to survive as an artist,

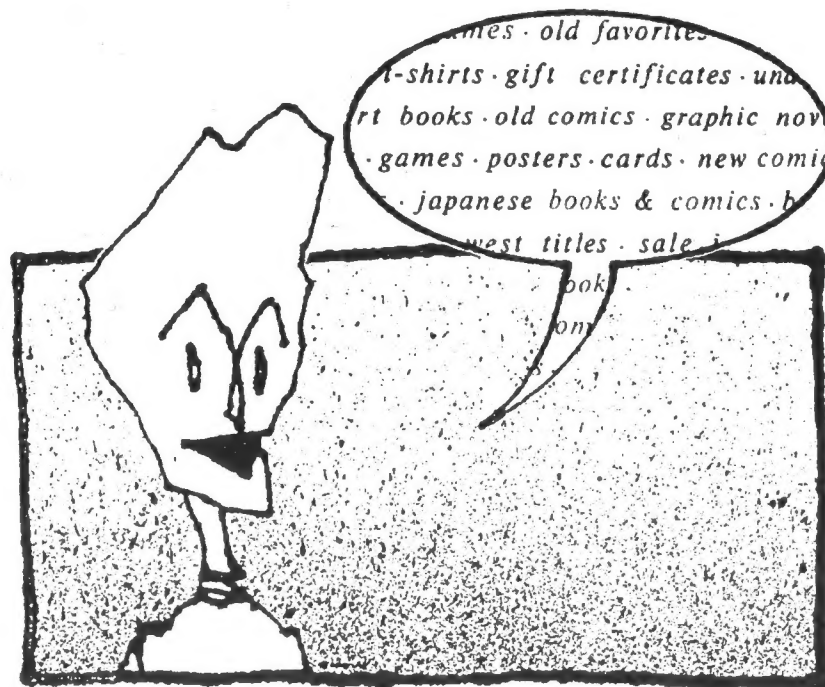
partly by what they said and partly by being passionate about it themselves. Next, there are Betye Saar, Sue Coe, Barbara Kruger, Leon Golub, Nancy Spero, Marcel Duchamp who've probably made the deepest dents, and obviously all their work has a lot of relevance to comics, might even be comics depending on definition, because of the potency of ideas/words/narratives in the art. There are many other artists I like, whose work also offers a lot on a formal-issues basis, like Morandi, Cornell, Lee Quinones, Viola Frey, on and on...but in the comics art world, the group of artists I learn the most from is the one I work with, the *Wimmen's Comix* San Francisco group, including Deni Loubert of Renegade Press, who's in Southern California, but comes up for most meetings. These women are an astonishingly talented and positive collaborative unit. It's kind of funny, or sick. Here they are, plugging away at doing better and better comics, critiquing each other's work, sharing the logistics/business crap by means of rotating co-editorships, and really anticipating a lot of what later becomes the Next Big Thing, like the political/social humor and satire, the erotica, the first-person stories, the individual, non-Marvel-style art (and God knows they beat out Los Bros. on presenting "realistic female characters!"), and they're just getting ignored, or looked down upon. Yet, as some comics fans I knew in college

said to me, in opining that my art wasn't near good enough for the big time, "Well, you could try *Wimmen's Comix*." Then a Harvey Pekar gets so much more attention than a Caryn Leschen or Dori Seda. At least people like Fantagraphics are coming around—publishing, for example, Carol Lay, Kaz, and Joe Sacco—it was just so fascist to be told there was one "good" style of art. Rebecka Wright showed me *Love and Rockets*—those Hernandezes made me proud of comics, and the blend of reality and myth they offer delights me because the reality is closer to my experience by a long sight than, say, a story about a fast-track girl reporter who never has to worry about money or birth control. Ah!, the joy of faking out the door—after all, you *should've* been on the guest list...by the way, I haven't been consciously making my list of favorite/influential artists balance out genderwise, but other than Mario, Gilbert, and Jaime, some other male artists whose

work I love are Bob X, George Herriman, and Vuillemin. With each of them, seeing their art blasted open new ways of looking at the page, in terms of black and white and composition and line quality, respectively. Bob X, as well as Dori and Joe Sacco, also gave me much-appreciated encouragement on a piece I did called "Why We Do It," which was autobiographical and not an upbeat comfy sort of story—I have an intense respect for Dori, for the perspective from which she wrote; her humor; the innocence of the cats she drew; and the authority of her draftsmanship. So when she really got into that piece and could identify, and Kryttre also liked it, that was probably when I first began to think maybe I could really do good comics. I'm convinced of the centrality of work to my life, so if I can't do good comics, I'll just raise good babies, animals, and gardens; but I was going to do that anyway.



— Preserving a Sense of Wonder... —



THERE'S NOTHING IT COULD FEAR...

SHUT UP WHINING.
GOD'S NOT GOING TO HELP
YOU! YOU'RE **BAD SEED**, YOU'LL
KILL ME JUST LIKE YOU KILLED
YOUR GRANDFATHER. HE AND I
BOTH LET OUR CIGARETTES'
ASHES GET REAL LONG SOME
TIMES... IF YOU EVEN MOVE
BEFORE THIS ONE FALLS OFF
I'LL BURN YOU WITH IT AGAIN.
YOU UGLY BASTARD,
SO SHUT UP
ABOUT GOD!

GOD! GOD GOD
GOD GOD?
ING, GOD G
TO HELP GOD

NOTHING THAT COULD ANGER IT.

IT'S JUST WHAT IT IS, AND IT'S NOT MY "IMAGINARY FRIEND."

I DIDN'T RAISE
YOU TO BE A
MONSTER.

I HAD ONE OF THOSE WHEN I WAS LITTLE, SO I KNOW THE DIFFERENCE. 

I DIDN'T MAKE IT UP.

IT'S THAT BAD
SEED-- IT'LL
TELL!

IT NEVER WANTS TO HURT MY
MOTHER. IT'S UNSELFISH;
ALL IT DOES IS PROTECT US.

AND I DON'T WANT TO HEARYOUR DAMN WHINING IN BED TONIGHT, EITHER, OR I'LL COME GIVE YOU SOMETHING TO CRY ABOUT: I'LL CRISS-CROSS YOUR FACE WITH A KNIFE WHILE YOU'RE ASLEEP, AND BREAK YOUR NOSE SO BAD IT'LL BE ALL OVER YOUR FACE! NOW GET TO BED!

OKAY,
MAMA.

IT HELPS ME NOT FIGHT BACK OR SCREAM. NOTHING SHE SAYS BOTHERS IT AT ALL... EVERYTHING IS FINE. NO OTHER WAY IT COULD BE.

IF I FOUGHT BACK OR SCREAMED
OR TOLD AND WASN'T BELIEVED,
SHE MIGHT KILL ME. IF THEY BE-
LIEVED ME, IT COULD BRING DIS-
GRACE TO THE FAMILY... AND
WORSE--THEY COULD
TAKE ME AWAY
FROM MY MOTHER.

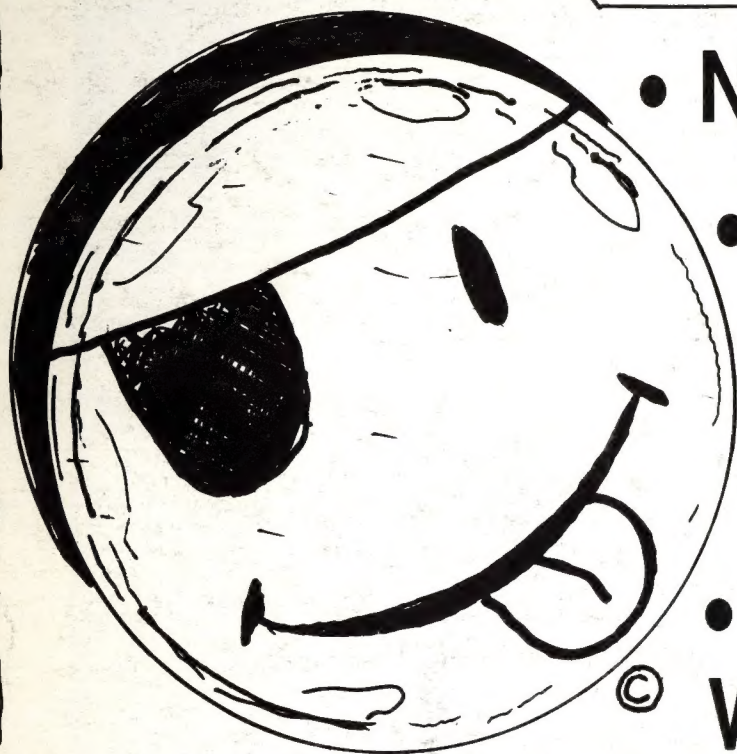
NOTHING SHE DOES
CAN BOTHER IT.

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